

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1-11. (Cancelled).

12. (Currently Amended) A porous material comprising:
silicon carbide particles as an aggregate; and
a silicon nitride binder bonding the silicon carbide particles so as to define pores present between the silicon carbide particles to provide an open porosity of 50% to 75%;

wherein the pores are defined by the silicon carbide particles and by a portion of the silicon nitride binder, and wherein a surface of the silicon nitride defining each pore is either free from any columnar silicon nitride or includes columnar silicon nitride, provided that an amount of columnar silicon nitride having a thickness of more than 2 μm and an aspect ratio of less than 10 is greater than an amount of columnar silicon nitride having a thickness of 2 μm or less or an aspect ratio of 10 or more.

13. (Currently Amended) A porous material comprising:
silicon carbide particles as an aggregate; and
a silicon nitride binder directly bonded with the silicon carbide particles and bonding the silicon carbide particles with one another so as to define pores between the silicon carbide particles;

wherein the pores are defined by the silicon carbide particles and by a portion of the silicon nitride binder and have a specific surface area of 1 m^2/g or less; and
wherein an open porosity of the porous material is 40 to 75%.

14-15. (Cancelled).

16. (Previously Presented) A porous material according to Claim 12, wherein the pores have an average pore diameter of 5 to 50 μm .

17. (Previously Presented) A porous material according to Claim 13, wherein the pores have an average pore diameter of 5 to 50 μm .

18. (Previously Presented) A porous material according to Claim 12, which has a heat resistance temperature of 1,200°C or more.

19. (Previously Presented) A porous material according to Claim 13, which has a heat resistance temperature of 1,200°C or more.

20. (Previously Presented) A porous material according to Claim 12, which has a gas permeability coefficient of 1 μm^2 or more.

21. (Previously Presented) A porous material according to Claim 13, which has a gas permeability coefficient of 1 μm^2 or more.

22-31. (Cancelled).